
Transportation Committee

HB 1844

Brief Description: Requiring criminal history record checks of current and prospective department of licensing employees who issue or may issue enhanced drivers' licenses and identicards.

Sponsors: Representatives Moeller, Ericksen, Finn, Hudgins, Driscoll, Kelley and Morrell; by request of Department of Licensing.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Licensing to conduct criminal history background checks of current and prospective employees involved in the issuance of enhanced driver's licenses and identicards.

Hearing Date: 2/11/09

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315)

Background:

The federal Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 mandated that the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State, develop and implement a plan to require United States citizens and foreign nationals to present a passport or other secure document when entering the United States. In April 2005, the Departments of State and Homeland Security announced the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), which will ultimately require individuals entering or re-entering the United States to present a passport or other acceptable secure identification. The identification requirements of the WHTI are scheduled to take full effect on June 1, 2009.

When announcing the Initiative, the Departments of State and Homeland Security identified the passport as the document of choice for entry or re-entry into the United States, but acknowledged that certain other documents might be acceptable in lieu of a passport. Pursuant to this option, the Department of Licensing (DOL) now issues a voluntary, enhanced driver's license or

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identocard (EDL) to an applicant who, in addition to meeting all other driver's license or identocard requirements, provides the DOL with proof of U.S. citizenship, identity, and state residency, and successfully completes an interview with a DOL licensing services representative. The EDL includes a biometric matching system based on facial recognition technology.

In order to issue the EDL, the DOL agreed to allow the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to conduct background checks on employees involved in the issuance of the cards. The agreement pursuant to which the DHS conducts these background checks expires at the end of June 2009.

Summary of Bill:

The DOL is required to investigate the conviction records of, and pending charges against, any current or prospective employee with the ability to issue an EDL or the ability to create or modify records of applicants for an EDL. This investigation takes the form of a background check through the state patrol and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The DOL is also required to reinvestigate such employees every five years.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.